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K S O M E

REMARKS

Upon the Late

DIFFERENCES

AMONG

The Dissenting MINISTERS
and PREACHERS.

WITH

A brief ANSWER to Mr. *Pierce*
of *Excester*.

And the Subtilty of some

To cover Heretical Principles,
DISCOVER'D *and* DETECTED.



L O N D O N :

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S O M E
R E M A R K S

Upon the
Late D I F F E R E N C E S , &c.

AS The Christian Religion is famous, above all other Systems, for its plainness and simplicity in Principle, tending directly to the great End, it proposes (*viz.*) the Salvation of Men; so are its Dictates, its Rules, its Doctrines and Revelations, without Disguises. No doubtful Answers are given by the Divine Oracle; but the Law is nigh unto thee, even in thy Mouth, it is neither to be mounted for up to Heaven, or div'd for into the Deep; 'tis a written Letter, and he that runs may read it. Sincerity rather than Learning has always been required in the Study of it, and searching the Scriptures, is a Work subjected to the meanest Capacities, the Spirit of God being always ready to Interpret the Word of God to all those who with an humble desire to be Instructed, implore his Teaching, and are sincerely resolv'd to be Obedient to the heavenly Vision.

When we find then any professing the Christian Religion, fly to Shifts, equivocal Expressions, partial Interpretations, and dilligent raising, rather than solving Doubts in the Interpretation of plain Scripture, it is no breach of Charity to conclude of such, that they are in the Wrong, rather than those, who in Obedience to our blessed Lord's Command, willingly search and believe the Scripture in whatsoever they Testify of him.

This Mark of Distinction, and this alone, rightly observ'd, will effectually guide us in our making a Judgment both of the Principles and of the Persons that now disturb the Peace of God's Church in this Nation.

The Dispute at Bottom, I mean the Substance of the Difference among us, is evidently the same it has been from the Beginning (*viz.*) Whether Jesus Christ be a God or a meer Man? the same Objections against our Faith in the Son of God as were rais'd by the first Opposers of it in the Christian Church, are reviv'd and insisted upon now, only that they are gloss'd over with the Sophistry of Words, and new invented coverings are fram'd to hide the Poison of the first Heresy. Error endeavours to appear in Masquerade that she might not be known by her natural Deformities, and might be mistaken for the heavenly beautiful Thing call'd Truth, by Ignorant unwary Minds.

As is the Doctrine it self, such is the Conduct of those that Support and Encourage it; by this Mark you may know them, shifting the plain interpretation of Scriptures, and deceiving us with new Glosses of Words, flying to the Disguises of Words to cover the Fraud of Practice: But I come to the Point before me directly. If they desire to look back, and to have the past Conduct of the anti-trinitarian

rian Party examin'd, I am ready to do it, and to fix the same Character upon their Conduct by undeniable Evidence, even beginning at *Arius* himself. But as I said I choose to come to the Point.

Some of the Dissenting Ministers and Preachers (I say Preachers, for all present were not, *as I find since*, ordain'd Ministers) met together at *Salter's-Hall*, to determine of what they should do with respect to the Breach among some of their Brethren the Dissenting Ministers at *Excester*.

It could hardly be expected that the Advice which it was propos'd should be given to the Ministers at *Excester* should be very sound, nor was it likely to be effectual, whilst it was not first determin'd whether the Assembly, in whose Name it was to be given, and by whose Suffrage it was to be concerted and drawn up, were Unanimous in their Principles concerning what those Divisions were rais'd for, and the Advice was to be given clearly in the main Point on what those Differences subsisted; and therefore the first enquiry most naturally revolv'd into the Dispute about their own Principles, before they enter'd into those of their Brethren.

In this Enquiry, those who had before given too just Cause of Suspicion, with relation to their Principles, subtilly evading the Question, began a complaint of the Breach of Charity, unchristian Censures, and the hard Dealings of some People with such Ministers as might not, in all Things, agree to some mysterious Points in Divinity in the same manner as others understood them, and how they were reproach'd as favourers of Heresy, because they might not be so clear in the Interpretation of some Scriptures concerning the Person of Christ as others expected them to be, and the like.

These

These and such like Complaints, might very well be suppos'd to bring on a Debate concerning the main Point in Question, (*viz.*) The Divinity of Christ; and it was very natural, whether they were the Words of any of the other Ministers or no, I say it was very natural to return, that the most effectual way for any Minister who thought it hard to be censur'd as unsound in Doctrine, was to make *a publick Recognition* of his Faith in the one Point in Controversy, *viz.* the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

The return to this was so far from refuting the reasonableness of it, or entring into the Question it self of the said Doctrine of the Trinity, that it run out into passionate and satyrical Reflections and Complaints, about Creed making and Impositions; charging those who freely and openly declar'd themselves ready to *give an Account of their Faith, and to confess Christ to be God equal with the Father*, with imposing NEW CREEDS, and putting Forms of their own making upon them, refusing to accept of a plain Acknowledgment of their Faith in the express literal Terms in the Scripture.

I need not repeat here the unjust Exclamations made by some hot Men against Persecution and Inquisition, and some other indecencies, which for the sake of Religion it self, I choose to omit; as if a desire that Men should let their Principles be known to those who they are employ'd to instruct, was an unbecoming Enquiry in their Brethren of the same Communion; or that because they were under no Episcopal Jurisdiction, they should therefore be under no Obligation to give an Account of their Faith even as often as they were required, much more when they were so justly required.

Such Men certainly forget that when they receiv'd their Ordination from the Ministers their Brethren
and

and fellow Servants of *Jesus Christ*, and where thereby admitted to the Pastoral Charge in the several Congregations they serve (I mean such as have been so Ordain'd) they were required by the Ministers who Ordain'd them to give an Account or Declaration of their Faith in the great and principle Articles of the Christian Religion, and that they did then allow that those Ministers had a sufficient Authority to require it of them, as also that it was on the Satisfaction in the particular Heads of the Declaration of their Faith then made, that they were admitted as Ministers, and accepted as Pastors by the respective Congregations committed to their Charge; nay, it was in the express Terms of those Declarations, that they were ordain'd Ministers, and accepted Pastors. Hence it is most just that the same Ministers who ordain'd them, and Congregations which accepted them, should certainly have the same Right, and Power, at any time after, to enquire of them, if they continued stedfast in the same Doctrine in the Terms of which they were receiv'd as Ministers, and to require them to make a publick Declaration of it as before; and upon their not so continuing Stedfast, or refusing to declare their Opinion, to reject and refuse them.

If this be not so, they have not rejected Episcopal Jurisdiction only, but rejected all Order and Government in Christ Church.

Those among them who calls themselves Presbyterians, and yet deny this, should do well to answer the 4th Section of the XXth Article of the Confessions of Faith formerly receiv'd here by the Assembly of Divines, and still acknowledged as the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian

terian Churches in *Scotland*, in *Ireland*, and in most parts of *England*.

As for those who call themselves Independents or Congregational, their own Principles acknowledge that the respective Churches have Power, upon all Occasions to enquire into the Principles of their Pastors, and that upon any Defection of their said Pastors from the Christian Faith on the Profession whereof they were admitted, they may be rejected; this is confirm'd by the Vth Article of the Institution of Churches, and Order appointed to them, annex'd to the Confession of the Congregational Churches in *England*, deliver'd in at their General Meeting at the *Savoy*, *Anno*. 1658. in these Words.

“ Particular Churches appointed by Authority of Christ, and intrusted with Power from him for the Ends before express'd, are each of them, as unto those Ends, the Seat of the Power which he is pleas'd to communicate to his Saints and Subjects in this World, and as such they receive it immediately from himself.

If then particular Churches have all the Power that Christ is pleas'd to communicate to his Subjects in this World, they have certainly Power to oblige their Ministers, if they see Cause to distrust the soundness of their Principles, to make new Declarations of their Faith, even as often as the said Churches see Cause to Question them thereof.

The XVIIIth Article of the same Institution says also, “ That every Church has Power to Censure any Member thereof (not excepting the Minister) who walk not according to the Rules and Laws appointed by *Jesus Christ* in
“ respect

“ respect of FAITH and LIFE, so the just
 “ Offence doth arise to the Church thereby. *Vid.*
 Declaration of Faith, and Order of the Con-
 gregational Churches, Pag. 37.

The Author of the Preface to the said Decla-
 ration of the Congregational Churches, also
 begins the said Preface, which was approv'd by
 the whole Body, with these Words ; “ Confes-
 “ sion of the Faith that is in us when justly call'd
 “ to it, is so indispensable a Duty all Men owe
 “ to the Glory of God, the Sovereign, that it
 “ is rank'd among the Duties of the First Com-
 “ mandment, and is therefore, by St. Paul,
 “ rank'd with Faith it self, as necessary to Salva-
 “ tion. *Vid.* Pref. to the Declaration of the
 Congregational Churches.

It is the most unaccountable thing in Nature,
 I mean the Nature of Religion, that Ministers of
 the Gospel should think it hard to be desired by
 their Brethren to make a Declaration of their
 Principles, or rather a Recognition of what
 they had formerly declar'd, that it might be
 known whether they continue stedfast in the
 Apostles or Apostolick Doctrine in the Terms of
 which they were receiv'd ; that I cannot imagine
 what other Reason can be given for it, but this,
 that they really have chang'd their Opinion, and
 are willing to conceal it : Tho' at the same time
 must be it acknowledg'd that it is a way of con-
 cealing it, that seems to me, to be next door to
 a perfect Discovery.

How can such Men complain of the Injustice
 of being suspected, and of the Injury they receive
 from the Reflections made upon their Conduct,
 when refusing so just a Request as that of Re-
 cognizing their antient Confession, they Legi-
 timate

imate all the Suspicions that can be entertain'd of their soundness in Principle.

I have been inform'd, and believe it to be true, that Mr. T—— a Dissenting Minister near *London*, having given Occasion to his Hearers to doubt the Soundness of his Principles, with respect to the Divinity, was ask'd this Question by a worthy and honourable Member of the Congregation, if he remember'd the Articles of the Confession of his Faith which he publickly made at his Ordination and Induction to the Church, and that having answer'd in the Affirmative, he was then ask'd if he pleas'd to repeat them, to which he reply'd, that he had alter'd his Opinion in some Things—— or to that purpose.

This Answer, if it was so, for I am not sure to the very Words, was Plain and Ingenuous, had he cavill'd at the reasonableness of the Demand at its being improper to multiply Declarations and Creeds, had he insisted upon its being a Persecution and an Inquisition, and broke with his People in a Passion, what would have been the Consequence but this, he would have manifested the Alteration of his Opinion as much, but with less Moderation and Decency, which I take to be the Case exactly here, where the Persons being supported by some Men of Character (who even without the Error have brought themselves into the Scandal of it by their needless Punctilio) lost their Temper, and discover'd their Principle not at all to the Advantage of their Characters, shewing as much weakness in their Passion, as they did before Subtilty in their Design.

It would a little Palliate the manner of their Proceedings, if they could, after something of
of

of Weight, as a sufficient Objection against the Request that was made them, (*viz.*) to clear themselves from Suspicion concerning their Opinions by subscribing to what was offer'd, and pray what was it that was offer'd for them to subscribe to ? was it any more than this, *viz.* to subscribe to what they had already subscrib'd to ? Had there indeed been any new Creed offer'd, had Mr. Bradbury, as has been foolishly Suggested, offer'd a Pocket Creed to them, there had then been room for some Reflection, tho' not for all the unmannerly Treatment of that Gentleman, which has been given him both in Print and otherwise.

I say, had any new Creed been offer'd them, or had they been desired to make any new Declaration of their Faith, or had they not all of them, *at least such as are Pastors*, subscrib'd already to the very Words that were now offered them, they had then had some room to talk of *Imposition* and *Persecution* ; but here was nothing propos'd to them, but in a few Words to declare, that they *still believ'd* as they had formerly declar'd *they did believe*, or otherwise to acknowledge as the Gentleman above honestly has acknowledg'd, (*viz.*) That they had alter'd their Judgment since that Time, which it is feard, is at the Bottom of it all.

This was so just a Request, and their Brethren had so much a right to make their Request, and and to insist upon it also, that I cannot see one Reason can be given against it, I am sure I have not yet seen any shadow of a Reason produc'd against it, and indeed it is evident that for want of good Reasons against this, that weak Cavil has been rais'd of some Men taking upon them

to impose new Creeds, nothing of which appears or was so much as intended ; but the Question is in short *Thus*, and 'tis so plain that there is no evading of it, there have been some Jealousies, some Reports, some Suggestions, some Suspicions, let them give it any other lighter softer Term, that some of those Men have entertain'd the newly reviv'd Errors in Doctrine as to the Trinity : To wipe off which, and effectually to answer all the Objections, it was mov'd that all the Ministers should declare that which they still adher'd to, the Confession of Faith which they all made at their Ordination, and which they have since subscrib'd to by virtue of the Act of Toleration, and in a Word, give it under their Hands, that they continu'd steadfast in the Doctrine, in the Terms of they which have been receiv'd as Ministers, and tollerated as Preachers of sound Doctrine.

And where pray is the hardship of all this, and what but having embrac'd new and reserv'd conceal'd Principles can occasion any Man's scrupling to come into such a Recognition of his former Profession.

It is said some have answer'd, that they are entirely right with subscribing Party in Doctrine, and ready to declare their Opinion upon all just Occasions, but they would not be imposed upon if there are any such who on the Punctilio of Honour, or a pique at what they may call assuming in their Brethren, have ventured to support, (so far as their going off with that Party has supported them) a set of Men who it is apparent seperated upon a worse Principle, I say if there be any such, I pray God give them Repentance, and restore them to a clearer sight of
their

their Duty, than for a Pique founded either in Pride or Passion, for other Foundations it cannot have to decline that solemn Recognition of their Faith in God their Saviour, which it ought to have been their Glory to have joyn'd in, and which they ought to have thought it a favourable Providence to have such an Occasion to joyn in, at a time when the Dignity of the Person of Christ, which has been so long acknowledg'd in his Church, and which they themselves have taught their Congregations to believe in, is so notorious oppugn'd, and the Heterodox Opinions of *Arius Socinus* and other Hereticks, so artfully couch'd, and with all possible Sophistry and Juggle conceal'd, and yet tacitly introduc'd among us.

If those Men have not preach'd Christ in vain among us, and if our Faith receiv'd by medium of their Ministration is not vain, Why should they decline, nay, why not cheerfully embrace every Opportunity to declare the soundness of their Faith, and their continuing in the Apostolick Doctrine of the Divinity of the Son of God, and why joyn at so critical a time as this with those, who do not decline to acknowledge that they have altered their Opinion ; is it not at least countenancing the Party who now set themselves up to bring the Godhead of Christ (which these say they own) into Dispute among us, or do they think they can prevail to have it said, that it was not the Divinity of Christ that was now the Question, but the Right the other Ministers had to demand of them a new Declaration.

Absurd Nicety ! has not every single Christian a right to ask of their Minister what his Belief is, concerning the essential Points of Religion ?

gion? nay, have not every Enemy a Right to challenge our Confession of Christ? is it a piece of subjection to render an Account of the Faith that is in us, or is it not rather an Honour for a Minister of Christ to render to the meanest Enquirer a Confession of his Lord and Master, and of his Faith in him? Was ever such an Answer given in the Primitive Times, when to own ones self to be a Christian, was a certain Introduction to Martyrdom? yet, I say, did ever Christian when he was ask'd by the meanest Roman Soldier whether he was a Christian or not, Answer, thou hast no right to ask me this Question; but did they not rather Glory in confessing Christ at the price of their lives?

But how, when a number of their Bretheren Ministers *propose* a Recognition of a point of Doctrine to Distinguish themselves from those, from whom it ought to be esteem'd their Honour to be distinguish'd, they not only refus'd to Recognize the same Doctrine they had so often, and on so many Occasions profess'd, but joyn with the known Perverters of that Doctrine, to the great Scandal of the Protestant Dissenters, and Confusion of their Hearers and fellow Christians, and all this upon the Ridiculous Nicety of the Ministers having no right to impose their Recognition upon them.

And when all is done and said concerning imposing, it really was not impos'd but propos'd, and cou'd more Temper have been preserv'd (a thing I am sorry to mention, it might have been calmly argu'd, and they might perhaps have suffer'd themselves to have been perswaded, rather to have glorify'd their exalted Redeemer in a just Recognition of his eternal Power and Godhead, than to have so far encourag'd those that detract from his Dignity, whose Principles at the same time they profess not to believe.

But

But to talk then no more of their being impos'd upon in this Matter, I think it is manifest they have impos'd upon themselves the Task of finding some other way, *I will not say better way*, to clear themselves from being of the Principles of those Men of whom they have thus made themselves a Party; certainly they will find this to be absolutely necessary, for seeing they tell us openly that they are sound in the Faith, that they own the Doctrine of the Trinity as express'd in their former Confessions, they will find it necessary to them to distinguish themselves in some effectual manner from those with whom they divided, from their Brethren; and how *they will do this*, or how they will persuade the World they are not fallen from the Faith *if they do not*, we wait to see; for I must confess, to me it seems that they have brought themselves into a Labyrinth, which they will not easily find the way out of.

If they think to do it by a publick Declaration of their Opinion in the Doctrine of the Trinity, which indeed seems the only way they have left, first of all it will be hard for them to do even this, without using either the same Words of the Article and Answers propos'd, or some other, perhaps less expressive, and therefore not less lyable to Exception, since the Composition of Words has been so well chosen, and so often deliberated, that the Learning and Wit of Man could never yet find out Words better adapted to the thing they were to express, or better fortify'd against all possible Cavils and Exceptions from the Enemy.

If then they take the same Form of Words, they will have a hard Task to find out a sufficient Reason why they did not joyn in the same Declaration with their Brethren, and if they do not use the same
Form

Form of Words, they will be sorely put to it to find another that shall not give us just Reason to suspect their Sincerity.

But not to beg the Question of them in the least Tittle, I will for once suppose that they may (tho' I still doubt it) find out some subsequent Method to satisfy the World that they are not touch'd in Principle at the Question in dispute, and that tho' they have joyn'd with those who they know are unsound in Doctrine in declining to sign the Declaration propos'd, *for Reasons as above*, yet that they do not at all joyn with them in their Opinion, but are themselves sound in the Orthodox Faith, believing the Son *Jesus Christ* to be God equal with the Father, I say suppose this, tho I do not grant it.

What Countenance to Error have they given, in assisting a Party to form a Majority which they now boast of, as due to them in their divided Capacity as to Doctrine, and which it had been impossible for them ever to have pretended to.

Is the nicety of a meer Quibble, concerning *proposing* or *imposing*, sufficient to justify your going over to a Party who are enter'd into a new Engagement against the Honour of our Redeemer? Can you be with them, when you say you are not of them, and would they have been able to have held up their Head against the Orthodox Ministers of Dissenters, if you had not joyn'd them? what Shame is this to the Dissenters themselves in general, and by what Rules will they say they Act, when their Ministers piqu'd against one another for the Punctilio's, of who takes upon them too much, or who should submit too much, shall rather joyn with God's Enemies

mies, than yeild an Inch in Superiority to their Brethren, which Brethren at the same time do not insift neither upon any Authority or Superiority over one another in the Proposal, or give any reasonable Grounds for the other to suggest it.

What then is the Scruple pretended, or is it indeed but a Scruple pretended? if so, then it may still be true which our Enemies boast of from this Occasion, (*viz.*) That a Majority of the Dissenting Ministers are opposers of the Doctrine of the Trinity, and deny *Jesus Christ* to be equal with the Father.

God forbid this should be true, but that it is so taken, as well by those Dissenters who are of the new Opinions, as by the Enemies of the Dissenters on the Church of *England* Side, is most True, and is evident from the manner of their printing the Names on either Side in their Journals, the *Post-Boy*, and other Pamphlets of the Party, so that by thus joyning with these Men, you are taken to be of them; the Orthodox Profession of *Christ Jesus*, God Eternal, and equal with the Father, is run down; by your means weaker Christians are offended, and made to waver and stagger in their Faith, and in a Word, a wound is given to the Interest of Religion in this Nation, too deep, I fear, for any of you to heal.

Is this the Effect of Passion or of Pride, if of Passion, your calmer Thoughts will retrieve the Blow, and you will, with a Temper becoming wise Men, and good Christians, Counter-act the wrong Step you have taken, by some such Method, as may restore the Peace and Charity so much wanted among us, and especially among

some of our Ministers, of whom it must now be said, that they have not, in all things, acted with the Candor and Prudence that became their Profession.

As to the Pride I forbear to speak of it, all is, Divisions have too much of the haughty Spirit in them, but I desire to cast the Mantle of Charity over all the Infirmities of our Bretheren, and rather Place this to the Account of the want of Temper, which was indeed the unhappiness of the meeting perhaps on all Sides; but that being suppos'd, it might be hoped the cooler Thought will direct to a review of your Conduct, and you will *seperate from the Tent of those Men*, for if you do not partake with them in the Offence, why should they, by your means, obtain the Reputation among Men, of having a Majority among the Ministers in favour of their Errors.

Either their are upon a Division, a Majority of the Dissenters, the Ministers I mean, against the Doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, or there are some other Things in Dispute, on which this Division was made: Some are mighty busy in perswading the World to believe that the Division was not upon the Point of Doctrine, but upon the nicety of subscribing to any thing at the peremptory Command of *a few warm Men*, who they say assum'd to themselves an Authority of imposing Creeds upon their Bretheren, which they had no just Authority to do.

But with Submission, this is not true in Fact, for let them pretend what they will, and gloss it over with what fine Words they will, whatever they understand of the Reason of their refusing to subscribe, the World understand it, a refusing to own and recognize the Doctrine, and it was no less in reallity; for whatever Cavils might be rais'd at the Occasion or at the Manner of requiring a Subscription, the
 Thing

Thing really in Debate was the Doctrine of Godhead, and Eternity of Christ, and nothing else, and all the World that hears it must take it so; for no Men can ever be so blind as to think the Ministers of the Gospel, if they had not differ'd essentially in the Point before them, would have broke with one another as they did, for the meer Ceremony of Signing or not Signing.

The World will presently conclude, that if it was the meer nicety of imposing that made the refusers refuse, they would yet have taken some care to have clear'd up their Characters from the Charge of being unsound in the Faith, and have at least effectually seperated themselves from the other Party who are known Opposers of the Doctrine which those profess to believe.

But as it now stands, we must own there is no room to suppose, but that they all divided upon a Doctrinal Question, and that the refusers have evidently refus'd to acknowledge the Godhead of Christ Jesus, and that in as open a manner as possible, having refus'd to Recognize the Fundamental Article of their Confession, which they formerly subscrib'd to.

Nor do the other People, with whom these Ministers joyn'd understand it any otherwise, or stick to make their boasts, that a Majority of the Ministers of their Opinion, and indeed they have room enough to do so, for if they had not, they would never have divided with them upon the great Question of subscribing to the belief of the Trinity. To say that the Question was not upon the Point of Faith, but the bare Subscription, would be to say very little to the Purpose, unless it should be to say, it was a Testimony that they had very little regard to the Weight of the greatest Question in Religion

that could be disputed upon, that they would so far give it up, and pretend to come off by a nicety about the Persons proposing to them to subscribe.

Let them therefore depend upon it, that in refusing the Subscription, they have refus'd the Doctrine, and rejected the Godhead and Eternity of Christ as far as they are capable of rejecting it, and so the World do and will understand it, unless they take some speedy Course to clear up that Point to the World, and to let the People, who boast of the Advantage obtain'd by their means know, that they detest the Error, and that they are not with them in their Opinions, however they might joyn with them in declaring the Subscription.

I observe in this juncture that the Ministers of *Excester*, whose Weakness was the unhappy groundwork of the ill manag'd Debate we are now speaking of, have, or at least One of them, has publish'd something in their Defence, how far it may serve to excuse them in the Eyes of other Christians, I may consider by it self; but I am perswaded it will contribute nothing to the excusing the Persons I am speaking of, who at the same time that they deny the Opinion, have joyn'd with the Persons, and thereby brought a Scandal not upon themselves only, but upon the whole Body of the Dissenters, as if a Majority of them were fallen from their Principles, and were tainted with the new Heresies, for such I must call them, in opposing the Divinity of our Blessed Redeemer.

If those People have espoused any New Principles concerning our blessed Redeemer, why do they evade the Question? Truth cometh to the Light, Innocence covets the strongest Tests, the narrowest Inquisition, the strictest Search. If they have not entertained new Notions or Principles, why are they afraid to declare their old ones.

If their new Notions are such as may be defended, why should they sham defending them? if they are not, why should they not be examined into? Mr. Peirce says in his *Case of the Ministers ejected at Exon*, that if it was to be a religious Test, that *Three and Two makes Five*, he would not subscribe; but he does not give one Season for such a Stiffness that has any Force in it, in the Case in Hand. The Reason he pretends to give is thus; " That I verily believed, " that the worst Mischief had been done to the " Church of God by imposing unscriptural Creeds " or Tests upon Men; and that now God had stirr'd " up a noble Spirit in Men, in whom we little ex- " pected it, to plead against Impositions; and there- " fore I could not in conscience tamely give up the " Liberty they were so bravely defending. "

Now pray what is this to the recognizing the Act of their former Confession, or letting People know whether they were of the same Opinion in the Cause disputed, (*viz.*) That of the Doctrine of the Trinity, or whether as the Person quoted above said, they had altered their Judgment? I think there is no sufficient Reason why any Man should, with so much Stiffness refuse to satisfy his Hearers, whose Souls are in some Measure cast upon him, and for whom he ought to express much more Tenderness, than to refuse to declare a Truth so evident, and which he
was

was so Clear in, as he must be in the Point of *Three and Two making five*. It savours of a Temper very far from the Scripture Rule of Charity, and the Affection to Souls which every Minister, as a Pastor of Christ's Flock, ought to have, whose Office, as by *Christ's Command to Peter*, is to feed his Sheep, and even, as *Christ* the good Shepherd did, to lay down his Life for the Sheep.

Instead then of giving a Scripture Rule for his Stiffness, or any Example from the Scripture, to justify their being ready to render an Account of their Faith, on the other Hand, he tells a long Story of *God having stirr'd up a Spirit in Men to plead against Impositions*, which by the way is a Circumlocution which we are left to understand many Ways, and does not lead us directly to any thing which concerns the Point in Hand. Unless we can be convinc'd that desiring to know whether Men continue in the same Principles they were formerly willing to profess, why should Men be so unwilling to express themselves with clearness and plainness in those Fundamental Articles, without which their Hearers cannot acquiesce in their Ministry? Is there nothing due to the Peace and Satisfaction of their People; suppose we should say the weaker Christians? Is there no regard owing them from their Ministers? Or is the Satisfaction of the Congregation of so mean Import to *Mr. Pierce*, that to quiet their Minds he would not so much as give it under his Hand, that *Three and Two makes Five*? I think this may be of the two, much rather be call'd Imposition than the other; for it Imposes our People
to

to submit to the Ministry and Instruction of their Pastors, whatever Errors they may fall into. While Mr. *Pierce* talks of a noble Spirit of Liberty inspiring the Ministers, he yet seems to take from the People the Liberty of choosing Orthodox Ministers, and declaiming them when they cease to be so, a Liberty which I hope the the Dissenters will never give up, and which they are every where bravely Defending, to use his own Words. And that this Matter may be set in a clear light, I desire to state the Matter of Christian Privileges with Mr. *Pierce* in a few Words.

The Liberty of Christians choosing their own Pastors, is a Privilege so evidently due to them, as well from Reason and from Scripture, as from the nature of Religion it self, that it is one of the main essential Points of Church Tests and Order, on which the Dissenters have differ'd from the Church of *England*.

At the Time when their Ministers are thus Inducted, they receive Ordination by the Imposition of Hands, &c. of other Ministers, and for a Satisfaction of the Congregation Choosing, make a Declaration of their Principles, that it may be known that they are sound in Doctrine.

As I have said before, it is in the Terms of this Declaration that the Relation of Pastors and People is reciprocally enter'd into ; by both Minister and People, I would only ask Mr. *Pierce* whether he thinks that if he, or any other Minister had, at their Ordination express their Belief of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the doubtful

ful epuivocal Expression, which he says Mr. *Withers* propos'd, or which are now frequently made use of, and that he had declar'd he would not, to give them Satisfaction, subscribe to this Truth as a Test, (*viz.*) That *Three and Two makes Five*; I say, I would only ask him, if he thinks any Congregation would have chosen or accepted him.

As they chose him in the Terms of his Declaration of Faith, so they sit under his Ministry on the supposition of his continuing stedfast in the Faith; if at any time he relinquishes the Principles he then confest, they have an undoubted Right of Relinquishing his Ministry.

Upon this Foot, which I think is very clear, the Seven Ministers, all of whom are known to be worthy, reverend, and upright Men, of Characters untainted, and never attack'd before on any Account whatsoever, much less with so much Indecency and Bitterness as Mr. *Pierce* in his Case, (who is junior to them all) has attack'd them.

The justice of their being call'd to take Cognisance of this Matter by the People is indisputable, the Dissenters Circumstances not admitting them to form any other Judicature than such as the voluntary Submission of the People gives Authority to. The Ministers thus acting, may perhaps, especially when the Account Mr. *Pierce* seems to Promise, comes to light, not be wanting to Truth, and their own Defence, in giving a full Account of their Proceedings, and perhaps may have something to say in their just Vindi-

Vindication, that may clear them from the unjust Challenge of Inquisitors, and from some other Imputations as ill-becoming Mr. *Peirce*, as they are ill supported by Truth.

As to the Advantage the Proprietors of the Meeting-Houses have taken to keep out of the Place of Worship Men declining a just Declaration of their Belief in the great Object of Worship, the Trinity, I cannot but think, that however they obtained that Power, they have made use of it for the true Ends for which it was vested in them, (*viz.*) For the Service and Worship of God, in such a Manner, and to God so and so understood, known, believ'd in, and confess'd, as the Ministers formerly officiating there had all along preach'd and confess'd him; it cannot be reasonable to think that the Doors of the Place of Worship should be open to Men to preach, whose Principles the Hearers being not satisfied in, they were likewise not satisfied to hear.

As to what Mr. *Peirce* alledges concerning the Oppression and Violence of taking the Key of the Meeting-House, I think it needs very little Answer; but what is already given by Mr. *Peirce*, he owns the Place "was built at the common charge;
 " the Gentlemen were made Proprietors only for
 " Form Sake, the Law making it necessary the
 " property should be vested in some Persons; and
 " the greater the Confidence was that was placed in
 " them, the more intolerable was their Oppression
 " when they betray'd their Trust. 'Tis plain the
 " People design'd the House for their own Use in the
 " Worship of God, and that it should be at their
 " Disposal. This was virtually own'd by them, as
 " often as they left the People to the choice of a
 D " Mini-

“ Minister. If they who were dissatisfy’d had with-
 “ drawn from us, and gone where they liked better ;
 “ or if they had attempted to eject us by the Votes
 “ of the People, we are too much Friends to Li-
 “ berty to have troubled the World with such a
 “ publick Complaint : But if these Proprietors may
 “ rightfully shut the Doors against whom the Peo-
 “ ple chuse, or (which is all one) may make them-
 “ selves the absolute Judges whom to admit, or
 “ whom to exclude, I can’t see why the People should
 “ ever more be concern’d in any Choice at all.
 “ These Gentlemen have by this means the perpe-
 “ tual Advowson of the Living ; and if the People
 “ will bear such an Insult upon their Liberty and
 “ just Right, there’s an End of one Principle the
 “ Dissenters have always pretended to hold. I think
 “ it becomes them, as ever they will shew them-
 “ selves Friends to Liberty, to protest against such
 “ unjust and oppressive Methods, I shall always su-
 “ spect a Cause which the Zealots can find in their
 “ Hearts to support by such Injustice.

“ I suppose some Notice will be taken of it for
 “ the sake of the common People ; as to Men of
 “ Sense, we know they cannot but despise it. As to
 “ ourselves, we have over and over declar’d, that
 “ we are intirely satisfy’d in all that the Scripture
 “ asserts concerning Christ, and ready to subscribe
 “ to any Words taken from thence.

In this Quotation is to be seen evidently the Opi-
 nion of the principal Part of the Hearers of Mr. *Peirce*;
 and Mr. *Hallor*’s Meeting. Mr. *Peirce* acknowledges
 that the Trustees had a legal Right to take Possession
 of the House ; he says it was given them in Trust
 and

and for Form Sake ; but let it be ask'd again was this Trust for the Minister or the People? they do not pretend the First, nor do they say, or so much as intimate that the three Trustees did it without the Consent or Directions of the People, from whom they receiv'd the Trust ; nay, the contrary is strongly inferr'd in the Answer, that the Trustees gave, *viz. That they were able to maintain what they had done.*

Mr. Peirce indeed insinuates, that the Majority of the small Pagers as he calls them, was on their Side, tho' that it is plain has not yet been put to the Tryal, and it is not without Ground supposed that when it is put to the Tryal fairly, it will appear to be otherwise ; the Business it seems is, that they would have the Question put for a Majority among the People, before the main Question in Point of Doctrine was sufficiently known ; and this I think favours of a Kind of Subtilty, and does not look so upright as I could wish. That they would have the People to vote for their continuing to preach, before they had made any Declaration to give Satisfaction in the soundness of their Principles ; this looks as if they depended upon the People's Ignorance for their Establishment, and would make use of the Affection, not the Judgment of the People, whereas the juster way by far, seems to be, to let their real Principles be first known, and then let the People vote freely besides : With what Satisfaction could the elder, and perhaps more grave and capable Members of the Church or Congregation sit down, by having Men of unsound Principles for the sake of a Majority, who may be at present favourably inclin'd to them, be allow'd to infuse those unsound Principles into the weaker Part of the People, and impose upon their Judgments by the Advantage they at present

might have from the good Opinion they had of their Minister? surely 'tis much more reasonable that they should have been suspended at *Officio*, if not *Beneficio*, till they had given Satisfaction of their Soundness in Doctrine, and of their Opinion in the great Point in Question. There may no doubt a Time come when the Favourers of Error will be farther distinguish'd, and even the meanest of Christians shall know and understand them; and without farther entering upon the Enquiry about a Majority, the ejected Ministry, as they call themselves, are, it seems, putting it upon a Tryal, being as Mr. *Peirce* himself has published, going to build themselves a Meeting-House, when it will early appear who has the Majority, the Professors of the Orthodox Faith, or the Favourers of the *Arian* Heresy.

And that this may not seem more severe or uncharitable than it is intended, no Severity or Uncharitableness being design'd here, or any Personal Reflection whatsoever, I must shew in a few Words, that nothing is said in this, but what is evident from Mr. *Peirce's* own Words, which I shall leave every impartial Reader to judge of.

In the 17th page of Mr. *Peirce's* Case, he complains of a Pamphlet, published I suppose in *Exon*, entituled *Arius Detected*; in *Peirce's* Words, are these, being Part of what was quoted above.

' On *Monday* the 19th was published a Pamphlet, ' intituled, *Arius Detected and Confuted*, &c. 'Twas ' design'd to come out a little sooner; but 'twas time ' enough to shew the Spirit of the Man. 'Tis indeed ' a Pamphlet written with as much weakness and bitterness as can be suppos'd. The whole Design is to
ex-

‘ expose us to Hatred and Scorn; charging us with
 ‘ Things we do not own, as that Christ is a Creature,
 ‘ &c. confidently asserting we hold so, tho’ we deny
 ‘ it; reviling us as *Arians*, tho’ we disown the pecu-
 ‘ liar Opinions of *Arius*.

That *Arius* was deem’d a Heretick by all the Or-
 thodox Christians of the Primitive Times, and his
 Opinions so blasphemous and abominable, that they
 are never spoken of by the antient Christians, but with
 Detestation, and his very Name always attended
 with some Marks of Infamy; yet there is nothing
 more remarkable in all Mr. *Peirce*’s Case, than his
 speaking so warily as to his own not being of *Arius*’s
 Opinion, and so favourably of those Opinions.

Mr. *Pierce* is too much a Master of Language
 to want Words more fully to have express’d him-
 self, tho’ he had not joyn’d any Epithets of ab-
 horrence to Distinguish himself.

But ’tis something strange, that when there is
 a strong suspicion of a Minister’s being infected
 with Arianism, and that carried on so far, and
 made so publick, that a breach of such a nature
 as this is has follow’d it; he should content him-
 self, and esteem it a sufficient Defence against all
 that has been offer’d, to say, he disowns the
 peculiar Opinions of *Arius*: It had at least been
 a stop towards giving his Hearers some Satis-
 faction, if he had thought fit to tell us what those
 PECULIAR Opinions of *Arius* were which he
 disowns, and what Opinions of *Arius* he does
 not disown; for it is very plain, he does not
 disown all *Arius*’s Opinions, because he only
 says he disowns the peculiar Opinons of *Arius*.

I know there is room here to argue that the Opinions of *Arius*, by which he was publickly stigmatiz'd as a Heretick, were general not peculiar, that he decry'd Orthodox Faith in general; but that they may not suggest a Cavilling Spirit in their Opposers, I wave that, and only insist upon this, that they ought to have told us what peculiar Opinions of *Arius* which they disown'd were, and whether this is one of them, (*viz.*) *That the Son of God was not equal, and of one substance with the Father?* If they had said they disown'd this in particular, it might have been some advance in favour of an Explication; but to say only, that they disown the particular Opinions of *Arius*, and not express what those Opinions are, is laying themselves open to such a Censure, as no innocent Man could be easie under. From hence, and from the Characters of the Seven Ministers who have censur'd them, whose Sincerity and Ability is well known, I cannot but think Mr. *Pierce's Case* is really no Vindication, but that in a Word he has left the real *Case of the ejected Ministers at Exon*, in a worse Condition than we found it, and we must be contented to wait for those other Writings on the Subject which Mr. *Pierce in the Case* gives us Reasons to expect.

In the mean time I cannot but observe, and with this I shall conclude, that by the way of arguing now us'd, avoiding plain Declarations upon pretence of Liberty, and of not being willing to impose upon the Gentlemen and Ministers of this Party, studiously avoid coming directly to the Thing, avading the Question, object-

objecting against Declarations, &c. on other Accounts, but not one of them will, either in their own Forms or any other, give us a clear View of their Opinions in the Doctrine of the Trinity ; and I think it cannot be call'd unjust for us to conclude from thence, that they are not clear in it themselves ; if they were, they would not be backward to own it, for no Man is fond of being suspected. When they please to give us a clear, fair, open Declaration of their Faith in this Point, we shall pay all the Defe-
rence possible to their Persons, and give all the Weight they can desire to their Arguments, not being doubtful but we shall be able to give them a fair Answer.



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